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December 6, 2001

Michael K. Powell, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

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AUG 19 2002

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WC DOCKET NO. 02-189

Dear Chairman Powell:

As the Executive Director of the Montana Rural Development Partnership, I am involved with many programs focused on the revitalization of Montana's small rural communities. Helping create a future for these communities is not an easy challenge as it requires re-educating citizens to embrace a different economic base, one that will move them away from reliance on natural resources and to technology based industry. We are making progress by using our mobile van and laptops to train people on the uses of the Internet.

Affordable access to advanced services is important to all communities now. It will only become more important in the future. I believe competition is a critical factor in keeping prices low and services competitive. The ability for Qwest to maximize the value of its existing infrastructure provides the possibility of more capital available for investment in Montana.

Qwest-Montana is planning to apply to the FCC for approval to enter the long distance business. I believe that by the time of that application, it will have demonstrated compliance with federal rules for re-entry. Given conformance with these requirements and on behalf of Montana's rural communities, I encourage your favorable approval of this application.

Sincerely,

Gene Vuckovich, Executive Director
Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc.

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